

Letters to Miss Mary E. Erwin - relating to history of the Erwin family.

Washington Irvings parents came from opposite ends of Great Britain, his father from Shapensha one of the Orksey Islands, his mother from Falmouth. The father ~~esd~~ was the son of Magnus Irving and Catherine Williamson. His ancestors bore on their seals the three holly leaves which are the arms of the Irvines of Drum one of the oldest and most respectable families of Scotland. The name spelled Irvin, Irwyn, Erwyne etc. Primitive spelling Erinveine, contracted to Eryvein, Erivine and finally Irvine. "Some of the foolish call it Irving."

The earliest ancestor to whom the descent of Irving has been traced, William De Irwin or De Irwyne, as the secretary and armour beauer of Robert Bruce, who when a g fugitive from the Court of Edward, was secreted in the house of William De Erwyn's father who was of the Irvines of Bonshaw, the oldest branch of Irvings of which there is any reliable record, and on leaving took with him his eldest son and made him his sècretary and armor bearer and for his continued fidelity knighted him and conferred on him his private coat of arms. (Name of De Irwyn home, Woodhouse, still standing in 1842) It was in Bruces Lordship of Annandale.

William De Irwyne was with him when he was routed at Methvin in June 1306, and shared all his subsequent dangers and hardships and was one of seven who were concealed with him in a copse of holly when his passed by. In memory of his escape he adopted as his private coat of arms, the three holly leaves with the motto "Sub sole sub umbra virens" Which he afterwards transferred to his faithful companions in arms in token of his unchanging fidelity. The motto and leaves have been the arms of the family ever since.

Williams De Irwyne was subsequently Master of the Rolls and ten years after the battle of Bannockburn, Bruce gave him in free barony the lands of the forest of Drum, near Aberdeen. The town of Drum, with its walls of solid masonry, yet stands as sound and unimpaired as when the estate was conveyed in 1324, and is still occupied by the Irvines and lays claim to the distinction of being the oldest inhabited dwelling in Scotland.

William De Erwyn or Sir William Irvine as he is styled in Visbets Heraldry married Mariota, the daughter of Robert Keith, Great Marshal of Scotland, who led the horse at Bannockburn, and was killed at the battle of Dublin, 1332. Of this family are the Irvines of Orkney.

Mr. Irvine received a symmetrical and regularly attested table of descent carrying his lineage through the senior representatives of the name to Magnus of 1608, the first Shapinshaw Irving and passing thence to the neighboring island of Pomona, through James "the law man" or Chief Judge of the Orkneys, of 1560 the father of Magnus and John off Erwyne of 1438 to the first Orkney Irvine and earliest cadet of Drum, William De Erwyn, and inhabitant of Kirkwall: in 1369, in which year we find the name of his brother Sir Thomas De Erwyn, the son of successor to the first Laird of Drum, among the Barone in Parliament.

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